

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for determining the thickness of a ferromagnetic material having known conductivity and permeability comprising the steps of:
- (a) engaging a constant signal with the ferromagnetic material for inducing a changed signal,
  - (b) generating a stepped saturation signal over a range of currents for engagement with the ferromagnetic material,
  - (c) detecting the changed signal as the saturation signal is varied over the range of currents,
  - (d) determining the relationship between the changed signal and the stepped saturation signal, and
  - (e) evaluating the thickness of the material based upon the relationship between the changed signal and the stepped saturation signal.

1           2.     The method defined in claim 1 for determining the thickness of a  
2 ferromagnetic material having known conductivity and permeability wherein the  
3 step of determining the relationship between the changed signal and the stepped  
4 saturation signal comprises the steps of:

- 5           (a)    for a plurality of thicknesses, normalizing the changed  
6                    signal,  
7           (b)    plotting the normalized changed signal versus the stepped  
8                    saturation signal for generating a normalized curve for each  
9                    thickness of material,  
10          (c)    determining the deviation of each normalized curve from a  
11                   standard curve for each thickness of material, and  
12          (d)    determining a total deviation associated with each  
13                   normalized curve for each thickness.

1           3.     The method defined in claim 1 for determining the thickness of a  
2 ferromagnetic material having known conductivity and permeability wherein the  
3 step of evaluating the thickness of the material based upon the relationship  
4 between the changed signal and the stepped saturation signal comprises the  
5 steps of:

- 6           (a)    deriving a function from the relationship of the deviation of  
7                    each normalized curve for each thickness of material, and  
8           (b)    evaluating the thickness of the material based upon the  
9                    function such that for any deviation a thickness can be  
10                  determined.

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- 1           4.     A method for determining the thickness of a ferromagnetic material  
2     having known conductivity and permeability comprising the steps of:
- 3               (a)     engaging a constant signal with the ferromagnetic material  
4                     for inducing a changed signal,
- 5               (b)     generating a saturation signal over a range of currents for  
6                     engagement with the ferromagnetic material,
- 7               (c)     detecting the changed signal as the saturation signal is  
8                     varied over the range of currents,
- 9               (d)     determining the relationship between the changed signal  
10                    and the saturation signal, further comprising:
- 11                    (1)    for a plurality of thicknesses, normalizing the changed  
12                            signal,
- 13                    (2)    plotting the normalized changed signal versus the  
14                            stepped saturation signal for generating a normalized  
15                            curve for each thickness of material,
- 16                    (3)    determining the deviation of each normalized curve  
17                            from a standard curve for each thickness of material,  
18                            and
- 19                    (4)    determining a deviation associated with each  
20                            normalized curve for each thickness, and
- 21               (e)     evaluating the thickness of the material based upon the  
22                     relationship between the changed signal and the saturation  
23                     signal, further comprising:
- 24                    (1)    deriving a function from the relationship of the  
25                            deviation of each normalized curve for each thickness  
26                            of material, and

27 (2) evaluating the thickness of the material based upon  
28 the function such that for any deviation a thickness is  
29 determined.

1 5. An apparatus for determining the thickness of a ferromagnetic  
2 material having known conductivity and permeability comprising:

- 3 (a) a transmitter for engaging a constant signal with the  
4 ferromagnetic material for creating a changed signal,  
5  
6 (b) a saturation device for generating a saturation signal over a  
7 range of currents for engagement with the ferromagnetic  
8 material,  
9  
10 (c) a receiver for detecting the changed signal as the saturation  
11 signal is varied over the range of currents,  
12 such that the relationship between the changed signal and  
the saturation signal is determined, and the thickness of the  
material based upon the relationship is determined.

1 6. A method for determining the thickness of a ferromagnetic material  
2 having known conductivity and permeability comprising the steps of:

- 3 (a) engaging a constant signal with the ferromagnetic material  
4 for inducing an changed signal,  
5  
6 (b) generating a swept saturation signal over a range of current  
7 for engagement with the ferromagnetic material,  
8  
9 (c) detecting the changed signal as the saturation signal is  
10 swept over the range of currents,  
11  
12 (d) determining the relationship between the changed signal  
13 and the swept saturation signal, and  
  
(e) evaluating the thickness of the material based upon the  
relationship between the changed signal and the swept  
saturation signal.

7. The method defined in claim 6 for determining the thickness of a ferromagnetic material having known conductivity and permeability wherein the step of determining the relationship between the altered transmitter signal and the swept-frequency saturation signal comprises the steps of:

- (a) for a plurality of thicknesses, normalizing the changed signal,
- (b) plotting the normalized changed signal versus the swept saturation signal for generating a normalized curve for each thickness of material,
- (c) determining the deviation of each normalized curve from a standard curve for each thickness of material, and
- (d) determining a deviation associated with each normalized curve for each thickness.

8. The method defined in claim 6 for determining the thickness of a ferromagnetic material having known conductivity and permeability wherein the step of evaluating the thickness of the material based upon the relationship between the changed signal and the swept saturation signal comprises the steps of:

- (a) deriving a function from the relationship of the deviation of each normalized curve for each thickness of material, and
- (b) evaluating the thickness of the material based upon the function such that for any deviation a thickness can be determined.

TOP SECRET S2/TB60

- 1           9.     A method for determining the thickness of a ferromagnetic material  
2     having known conductivity and permeability comprising the steps of:
- 3               (a)     engaging a constant signal with the ferromagnetic material for  
4                       creating an changed signal,
- 5               (b)     generating a saturation signal over a range of currents for  
6                       engagement with the ferromagnetic material,
- 7               (c)     detecting the changed signal as the saturation signal is varied  
8                       over the range of currents,
- 9               (d)     determining the relationship between the changed signal and  
10                      the saturation signal, further comprising:
- 11                    (1)     for a plurality of thicknesses, normalizing the changed  
12                              signal,
- 13                    (2)     plotting the normalized changed signal versus the  
14                              saturation signal for generating a normalized curve for  
15                              each thickness of material,
- 16                    (3)     determining the deviation of each normalized curve from  
17                              a standard curve for each thickness of material, and
- 18                    (4)     determining a deviation associated with each normalized  
19                              curve for each thickness, and
- 20               (e)     evaluating the thickness of the material based upon the  
21                       relationship between the changed signal and the saturation  
22                       signal, further comprising:
- 23                    (1)     deriving a function from the relationship of the deviation  
24                              of each normalized curve for each thickness of material,  
25                              and

